

THE DIRECTOR OF  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Deputy for National Intelligence

15 February 1978

NOTE FOR: The Director

I have turned over to [redacted] and the Legislative Counsel the problem of negotiating corrections to the SSCI report on the A Team-B Team exercise. The best we can hope for is that the Committee staff will recognize and want to correct the inaccuracies that Howie Stoertz has highlighted in his memo.

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Incorporated in Howie's memo is a draft statement to be given in response to any press queries generated by the release of the Committee report. I commend this to you and Herb Hetu.

[redacted]

Robert R. Bowie  
D/DCI/NI

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Attachment

Distribution:

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## THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

SP - 41/78  
15 February 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, National Foreign Assessment Center

FROM: National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Programs

SUBJECT: SSCI Statement on A-B Team Exercise

1. You should be aware of the attached statement, and you should make the DCI aware of it. The Committee initially proposed to release it to the press on Wednesday afternoon, 15 February, but has agreed to postpone release for 24 hours because [ ] informed them that you would be unable to review it until today. We have been invited to review it "for classification" only. Several other matters should also be considered, however--these are possible impact, factual accuracy, and DCI response to press inquiries.

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2. Classification. We find nothing in the Committee's basic statement that could justify our objecting to its release on security grounds. There is one part of Senator Wallop's separate statement that could be considered classified, but that part is also inaccurate, and a proposal to delete it on those grounds is recommended later in this memo.

3. Possible Impact. It seems unlikely that the Committee's basic statement will draw major headlines. The A-B Team controversy is probably a pretty dead horse, as Hepworth puts it, in that it deals with an episode of more than a year ago in the waning days of a previous Administration.

4. There is a possibility, however, that adverse publicity will derive from the blanket criticisms of past estimates in the separate statements of Senators Moynihan and Wallop. For example, on page 2 of his statement, Senator Moynihan seems to lay the blame for an erosion of relative US strategic strength largely on faulty intelligence estimates. He takes no cognizance of other factors which affected US policy decisions in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Further, in criticizing every estimate "for ten years in a row" as out of touch with reality, Senator Wallop fails to acknowledge the hardening in tone and thrust which occurred in the NIE portrayal of the threat in the two or three years immediately preceding the A-B Team exercise. This was specifically noted by George Bush in a letter to all recipients of the 1976 NIE, in which he said that this was "the latest in a series of estimates"

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that presented "a starker appreciation of Soviet capabilities and intentions" on the basis of accumulating evidence of "the continuing persistence and vigor" of Soviet strategic programs. (Bush letter attached.)

5. A possible course of action would be for the DCI to contact Chairman Bayh to suggest that no purpose would be served by exhuming the A-B Team exercise at this late date. The DCI could suggest further that the constructive purpose of the Committee statement may well be negated by the separate statements of Senators Moynihan and Wallop, which reopen the blanket criticism of the NIEs in a manner reminiscent of the B Team approach. But because the Committee has invested so much time and staff work in this investigation, it seems very unlikely that the Chairman will kill the statement. [ ] is probably right that, in the end, we will probably have to live with its release. It may therefore be unwise for the DCI to spend any of his good will with the Chairman by suggesting that the statement not be released.

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6. Factual Accuracy. The basic statement is reasonably accurate in its representation of the A-B Team episode. There are two aspects of the statement which could be somewhat misleading, however:

a. Owing in part to the long gestation of this statement, it is not now as clear as it should be that this was an exercise conducted in one year, 1976, in connection with only one of the many NIEs that the Intelligence Community produces. I recommend that the Committee staff be urged to clarify this matter at two spots in the statement:

--page 1, paragraph 1. Add to end of the paragraph "and conducted during the preparation of the 1976 NIE on Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict."

--page 7, last paragraph, first sentence. Change "The most recent NIE" to "The 1976 NIE on Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict."

b. Many of the Committee's recommendations call for procedures which the Intelligence Community has long practiced and/or which the DCI and D/NFAC are now adopting or strengthening. Thus, while not inaccurate in a strict sense, the recommendations may erroneously imply that the procedures are not what they are. A DCI response to press inquiries could seek to correct any possible misunderstanding.

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c. On page 4 of Senator Wallop's separate statement it is alleged that "while consciously refusing to entertain the Soviets' own conception of what they are about militarily, the authors of the NIEs have ended up conceiving of the Soviets' enterprise in terms of our own doctrine of MAD" (that is, mutual assured destruction). While it is true that our comparisons of US and Soviet forces use indexes which tend to stress MAD criteria, the discussion of Soviet strategic conceptions in the 1976 NIE is absolutely clear that the Soviet conception stresses warfighting and war survival and does not regard mutual assured destruction as a satisfactory long-term relationship. I recommend that the Committee staff be informed that the quoted excerpt from Senator Wallop's separate statement is an inaccurate representation of what the NIE says, as can clearly be seen from paragraphs 4 and 5 of the summary volume on page 18 (see attached), and that this inaccurate representation should be deleted from the Senator's statement.

6. DCI Response to Press Inquiries. The DCI could seek to clarify NIE procedures and to emphasize his own measures to strengthen them by responding to press inquiries along the following lines:

"While the A-B Team experiment was conducted before I became DCI, the Committee's investigation and report on it has been helpful. I agree with many of the Committee's recommendations. I strongly support the need for NIEs to openly inform our policymakers about differences of judgment and alternative analyses within the Intelligence Community. While the right and duty of dissent has been a feature of NIEs throughout their history, our recent practice is to display alternative views, and the reasons for them, in the body of the NIE rather than relegating them to footnotes.

"I have taken steps to increase the use of outside expertise in preparing and critiquing important estimates like the NIE on Soviet strategic forces, and to see to it that panels of consultants represent a breadth of experience and viewpoint. We are experimenting with different forms of presentation. I agree that changes in facts and probabilities should be highlighted, and we are seeking to do so.

"I don't agree that an estimate on Soviet military forces necessarily has to reach out into all aspects of Soviet policy and the US-Soviet relationship. I do consider that Soviet capabilities and intentions are equally vital US concerns, and I have taken steps to improve our methods of producing estimates on Soviet national policy and intentions as well as those on military capabilities.

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"Through closer integration between estimates, analysis, and outside expertise now in progress under Dr. Bowie in the new National Foreign Assessments Center, we are making improvements of the sort the Committee seeks in the quality and utility of our total product. I expect to continue to work closely with the Committee to seek further improvements.

"As to net assessments, I agree that there are limits beyond which NIEs cannot properly go. I have been consulting with other officials of the Administration to see whether new mechanisms for net assessments would be desirable.

"I am determined that our estimative conclusions will continue to be shaped by the best possible evidence and analysis, without fear of any outside pressures or uncongenial reactions. The Congress need have no concern on this point.

"With respect to the separate statements by several members of the Committee, I do not intend to discuss the substance of these NIEs in an unclassified forum. I agree that we need to do everything possible to sharpen our thinking, in part through presentation of alternative analyses.

"The release of information and conclusions to the public is a difficult issue, because in many cases our sources are sensitive and can be cut off. I am approaching this issue on a case-by-case basis."

7. Recommendations: That you inform the DCI and recommend to him:

a. That the Committee staff be informed that we have no objections to release on security grounds;

b. That OLC negotiate with the Committee staff to secure the recommended corrections in the basic statement and in Senator Wallop's separate statement.



Howard Stoertz, Jr.

Attachments

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SUBJECT: SSCI Statement on A-B Team Exercise

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